Notes on Eugenics

Greek origin- Eu=”good/well”

Genes= “born”

Eugenics= The theory or practice of improving the genetic quality of the human population

Really this means trying to control the reproduction of people with desired traits (for example the Aryan race that Hitler thought was supreme was encouraged to make babies for the good of the German people)

Francis Galton (1822-1911)- Relative of Charles Darwin; Founder of Eugenics; English Natural Scientist who claimed desirable traits were hereditary so via “natural selection” performed by humans, one could create a superior human being

Founders were social activists (not specialists in genetics or biology) who thought they could rid the population of disease, retardation, deformities as well as crime and anti-social behavior

Where? Used in France, Germany, US and Great Britain in 1860s-70s; popular in the early 20th century

How? Sterilize those people with “qualities” you don’t want them to pass on to offspring; mass murder; or euthanasia (ending a life intentionally in order to relieve pain and suffering)

Implementation varied by country but some targets were: (have them brainstorm this)

Poor

Mentally ill

Blind

Deaf

Disabled

Promiscuous

Homosexual

Racial groups like the Gypsies and Jews

= unfit to pass on their genes